



NATACHA SAMUEL 2023-11-07

## PROFANATIONS AND BARBARISMS

NECROPOLITICS ANTISEMITISM, HAMAS-FASCISM, KRIEG, NAHOSTKONFLIKT

From *lundi matin* #402 (06/11/2023) ...

### *Profanations and barbarisms*

The Israeli government, by fanatically bombing Gaza, is profaning the deaths of October 7. And it is profaning those who died long before, under the bullets of the Nazis and in the gas chambers, since it dares to invoke their memory to massacre without restraint. I feel a deep shame as a Jew and I state, not in my name, nor in that of so many of my people who perished 80 years ago.

There is pain for every death since October 7. Pain for the hell made in Gaza, which every day further deepens the worst, what was still unimaginable the day before. Leave the north for the south, they say: but they bomb south and north, they bomb the evacuation routes already blocked by Hamas. Pain for the hostages and their families that the Israeli government, in its vengeful rage, says it is ready to sacrifice. They have as little regard for life as the bloodthirsty nihilists of Hamas, who send 20-year-old boys from Qatar to be killed by the thousands while committing insane massacres and assume responsibility for the terrible reprisals to come on the people of Gaza. Arab lives, Muslim lives or Jewish lives, it doesn't matter to any of them: it is life itself that they want. There is no point in hiding behind the twisted words of the victors; a charred child is a charred child, whether hands have touched it or whether it has been blown up by a bomb. Netanyahu and his band of power-hungry racist fools are not Jews, they deserve no name other than barbarism. And so too Hamas, which by relying on the just and vital struggle of the Palestinians against Israeli oppression, has diverted it through acts which no longer relate to, which go beyond, the perspective of a liberation struggle. Excess is the barbaric "remainder" on both sides, ready to drag everyone into ruin. A deadly symmetry, a two-headed monster; these are not two adversaries facing each other, it is rather the same force of death, the same nihilism with a theological background, rooted in a fantasy that is both suicidal and exterminating, which resents the very possibility of common life. Since October 7, we have seen Israelis who lost their loved ones in the massacres speaking out to demand that vengeful massacres not be committed in their name, to say that new massacres cannot console or ease their pain. The only thing that could ease their pain is if it could serve as a lever to build a possible life for everyone together, without resorting to violence. This position is not only the consequence of what is politically evident; it is the fruit of a moral construction so solid that it does not allow itself to be struck by pain. It asks not only that it be greeted, but that it be taken as a model.

### *Our bodies far away*

Since October 7, I no longer completely recognise myself. Something has taken place and continues to take place which is causing my body to mutate, causing it to expand – as Paul Celan said that it was a question of expanding art – to make room for what is happening and to hope to make it thinkable, or at least capable of producing new thought and action. This change is underway as history advances day by day. My words are therefore located in time, in addition to being in a place – my body as a Jewish woman born and living in France, struck by events which take place far from it, but whose force of explosion is such that she can only take it on.

Since October 7, voices have been heard from all sides, in the international press and on social media. They interweave facts, affects, levels of reality and heterogeneous statements which collide and interpenetrate to the point of vertigo – cries and images of those whose bodies are traversed by horror there, analyses by journalists and politicians, interpretations by researchers, impromptu reactions, appeals and judgements from everywhere, polemical commentaries. The situation mobilises everyone's minds and words, whether near or far. We can read this as a good sign, a desire to connect, to intervene, to think and to act to stop the forces of death at work. It is also a responsibility: public opinion is strong, and the situation is more than delicate. Never have we felt so close to the risk of tipping towards a new

generalised war. From this strip of Asian land which acts as an Abrahamic epicentre, the world can burst into flames, lit by the fuses drawn by the most highly flammable fault lines. They cross Israel, the United States, Europe, the Arab world, Iran, Turkey, Russia, China, the Sahel, Muslim and Jewish diasporas everywhere.

Why, then, do we speak out? There are those who are affected physically, right now. They are Palestinian or Israeli, they have lost loved ones, they are in danger of death. There is an urgency to witness; there are desperate calls for a solution. There are those whom the situation convokes emotionally through contiguity or rebound; the Arabs, the Muslims, the Jews, the friends of ones and the others. There are also those who feel engaged, by history, in this political-symbolic-theological entanglement.

A large number of the statements we have heard and read since October 7 are immediately partisan. They unconditionally claim to be “pro” or “anti”. They are outraged and condemn unilaterally. Group logic is at work: we identify with a camp, we affiliate. In the name of this affiliation, we are ready to make many arrangements with the facts as well as with history that we often only know through ideological thinking with which we are willingly content, consciously or not. We are ready to ignore prudence, humility and the work that the search for a just and fruitful position requires. As if it no longer matters even to know what we know, to recognise the narrow limits of our knowledge with regard to a political and human situation. Partisan logic requires, or in any case allows, that we strategize our words, that we bias our interpretations. We are summoned to abdicate, or not to become active, setting aside the possibility of an encounter with the pain of the one we say is other. Duties of reserve, conflicts of loyalty and other community or affinity considerations end up dangerously polarising our positions.

In doing so, rather than speaking out against the war, not only do we admit it, but we must measure it, replay it, fuel it, inflame it. We have a responsibility, we who are far away; we who, at a distance from the epicentre, speak from bodies in relative peace, from bodies in any case out of immediate danger and the horror of the loss of loved ones. If our words no longer allow for levity, they can on the other hand rely on distance to try to convey a reflective, open voice, which strives for lucidity and to counter the logic of war; which avoids the trap of replaying here the fault lines that tear apart over there. We cannot counter war by replaying war. We have to invent, to counter-propose, to forge new connections. Far from the urgency and the din of war, we have to try to unfold things together beyond the initial antagonisms, to cautiously construct an imaginary and a common language, in an awareness of our own limits and with a readiness to deconstruct them, to question them in an active encounter. We cannot wait for the end of the war; on the contrary we must seek now, here, to stop its progression.

We must ask ourselves why we are speaking out. Is it to position oneself in terms of identity? Is it to unknowingly express the cheap enjoyment of a spectacle of death? Is it to appease one's own frustrations, one's feeling of colonial guilt or towards the Jews of Europe? Or is it, following Hannah Arendt's invitation to embark on the *vita activa*, to take a position and express a word-action which seeks to participate in the construction of a possible life for all, together?

Maybe it's about disaffiliating. It is not a matter of renouncing one's own subjectivity and obliterating one's own body – that would be masochistic, or imbecilic, perhaps impossible in any case – but to recognise their limits. I am Jewish, a granddaughter of massacred Polish people on one side, Arab communists on the other: these are my coordinates. I can state what I feel and think from these coordinates, as one gives one's position. But my speech will only have meaning if it comes as an opening, if it leaves room for other words, if it comes as a question. Vigilance with regard to one's own instinctive or inherited positions, distrust with regard to clan mechanics, openness to deconstruction, tracking down one's own blind spots, and, above all, the acceptance of contradiction, of apparent paradoxes.

Since October 7, we have had the feeling that the semblance of peace, in which we lead our Western lives, could slip away from under our feet at any moment. Our worlds built on violent and criminal foundations, our lives built on oppressive, colonial, discriminatory, racist underground mechanisms, are summoned to show their true face. Jacques Lacan says that we cannot know reality; we can only bump into it. This atrocious war causes a shock with reality. Its merit is to melt away the ice of false pretences, to realign sight with its index: there is no peaceful life without justice and equality. The other denied as other, that is to say as similar, the other denied in their humanity similar to mine, the other animalised, objectified, faceless, unworthy of being mourned: wanting to keep them in this position is to want war and destruction to come one day. History offers us a tragic resting point, producing before our eyes this shock of reality, a shock which can open them and lead, following Judith Butler's expression this time, to a new political morality. This is perhaps the first time that a war has broken out there when the last witnesses to return from Auschwitz have disappeared. As if one period were closing, waiting for another to open: an invitation to collectively carry history, not to make it one's own – which would be an absurd, obscene usurpation –, but to ensure that it no longer happens again, anywhere, with regard to anyone.

Cease fire/freedom for all the hostages/stop the carnage

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